

Poetry.

OUR WORK IN LIFE.

OSCAR B. SMITH.

We seek for one of courage tried and true,
Who knows the right, and knowing, dares pursue.
We call for wisdom, for an earnest man,
With faith in all his acts, to lead the van.
Too long have vice and ignorance held sway—
We call for virtue now to lead the way;
For honesty sincere, whate'er befall—
Our leader shall respect the rights of all.
The truth unfettered he shall aye maintain—
God's chariot onward rolls, resistance vain.

When shall the brave, the wise, the true, and just
March ever on to conquer self and lust?
To conquer selfish aims and vict'ry win
O'er all the hosts of wrong, the woes of sin?
The foe is here, is there, is everywhere;
O for the man of might to do and dare!

Thus cried a soul amid the sin and strife
Of this great world; he, but a type of life.
He thought some other might the battle win,
Some other overthrow the hosts of sin.
But hark! comes through the clouds a stern reply;
"O timid one, wouldst thou the conflict fly?
The truth shall triumph; go thou, join the van,
Engage the foe till death—thou art the man!"

—New York Observer.

Contributions.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE ORDINANCES.

J. L. GILLIN.

NO. IV.—FEET WASHING.

In examining the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper we noticed the conditions of life existing at the time they were given, and pointed out how those conditions continue in their essential features to-day. We also endeavored to call attention to the adaptability of the ordinances instituted by Christ to correct those conditions and enthrone new life and impart new ideals of conduct to the life of the world. We also showed how Christ began with the disciples and committed to them the duty of living these new ideals, and gave them ordinances to teach them again and again the lessons they might be liable to forget, since they would be surrounded by ideals diametrically opposed to their Savior's.

We have once more to notice the condition of religious and secular thought in the world at the time of Christ.

The Jews brought by the hand of God from bondage to a promised land, and strongly impressed with the sense of a divine call, had passed successively through a career of success, apostacy, captivity and disgrace oft repeated. They misinterpreted their call, believing that God had called them for their own sake. They failed to see that God desired to make them, who were a race peculiarly adapted

thereto by their rich religious nature, the teachers of the true religion to the world. Errors never go singly, nor do they die childless. Hence, this people, who should have been the most humble, by following a prompting of selfishness became the most proud; and they who should have been the teachers of the Gentiles spurned as too debased and worthless to merit a passing notice from one of God's chosen people.

Such was the condition of the Jews when the humble Nazarene appeared with the call of repentance in the midst of their moral emptiness and hypocrisy. That divine attribute, humility, had never been learned. Its opposite, selfish pride, was the criterion of Jewish life. Into such an atmosphere the Christ of God was born, and with men imbued with these false, narrow, selfish and materialistic notions of God, righteousness and the coming Messiah, he started "this way" destined to change the basis of morals,—lift empires from their foundations, and turn the course of history from its wonted channel.

But pride was the curse not only of Jewish life, but also of the life of the Gentiles. Slowly are God's thoughts perceived by the best. And if those who were chosen to bless the nations of the earth failed to learn humility, could anything better be expected of those who were in greater need of light, to whom a special call had never been given? One needs but to read the history of the surrounding nations,—a history blood-stained, blackened with superstition, besmirched with lasciviousness and all uncleanness, and permeated through and through by the rending demon of selfish haughtiness, to see the world mutely but beseechingly reaching up through the darkness with pleading hands for the manifestations of a divine and new quality in human life, viz., *humility*.

To no eyes were these sad facts more apparent than to those of the Carpenter's Son. To no heart did that silent, unconscious appeal come with greater power to move the heroic to action than to his.

He saw it,—a world in turmoil, humanity at war, a race of Ishmaelites. He saw it and the sight stirred with agonizing pathos the depths of his great soul, prompted words such as man never spoke and inspired a life of love and sacrifice, at which even his church after nineteen hundred years gaze in stupefied, despairing wonder. Hence, in those last solemn hours of Jesus' life, when he instituted the ordinances of Feet Washing and the Lord's Supper,—hours into which was pressed the divinest fulness of the divinest Son of Man, it was natural that words

should have been spoken filled with lessons for all the future, and that examples should have been set and precepts laid upon the disciples containing the key to truths yet unguessed and promises of a future yet undreamed of. These disciples, rude, untaught and filled with gross and materialistic notions of Christ's kingdom were to be equipped to bear his life to the world.

We have just seen that the world stood in deep need of this quality of his life, humility. Hence, he left an ordinance by observing which they should learn for themselves that quality of divine humility and helpful service, the import of which, when filled with the Holy Spirit, they should learn, and *know what Jesus had done unto them*. Now what could inculcate a hitherto unknown,—or known only to be despised quality of life, better than an ordinance to be carried down through the centuries. The early disciples when endued with the Holy Spirit saw this, and with this end in view it was observed in the early church. The success that attended its observance at that time, in cultivating a Christ-like humility is shown by the testimony of such a proud pagan as Pliny, and by the low estimate put upon it by all the proud Romans, who confused it with Jewish obstinacy and hate. It was a quality of life with which they had never come in contact, and on their principles of life could not understand, that caused the Christians to endure persecution with such meekness, yet such persistence withal. It was that divine humility, learned by the disciples around their common table in the ordinance of Feet Washing, that made of the proud Pharisee, Saul, the tent-maker, Paul preaching to the poor and despised of many cities. That it was that bowed the heads of men, in whose hearts fear had never looked, for the sake of the Savior of men. That it was that shone in the midst of many a martyr-fire, brighter than the consuming flame. And that humility it was that possessed these men to the extent that they, many of whom would have adorned the Lyceum of Athens in the days of Plato or the Forum of Rome in the time of Cicero, willingly counted themselves the offscourings of the earth for their Master's sake.

To a shameful extent the great churches of to-day have not this quality. Yet we hear men say that this ordinance of Feet Washing was intended only for the early disciples! Evidently, if we may judge of its necessity on utilitarian grounds, it was intended for all men who have not yet learned Christ-like humility.

Is not the world governed by maxims and principles, by it considered funda-